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CONCENTRATION CAMP WAS DIFFERENT FOR ME.

March 19, 1944. The unbelievable has happened. The Germans occupied Hungary. We knew we would be killed, my sister and I, because we were Jewish and heard what Hitler did to the Jews in other countries.

So that afternoon, knowing that everything will be over soon, we went to the most elegant pastry shop in Budapest, the Gerbaud cukraszda, and each consumed four pieces of pastry. If we had to die, at least we had the best french pastry to remember. We were fourteen and fifteen years old respectively and we were students in high school in Budapest. ★

My father was a lawyer in a small town, Sarbogard ✓ of approximately 10,000 inhabitants and about 300 Jewish people. After the feast in the pastry shop I went back to my boarding school and Bobbie to her place of residence to think. What should we do now? Go back to Sarbogard where certain death awaited us, or stay in Budapest and hide. My boyfriend Ivan already had a hiding place with his mother and sister and he said I could join him there. But what about my sister? In the mean time our parents urged us to come back, because no matter what happened, the family would be together. All these considerations plus the fact that after a few weeks, it became dangerous to be seen on the street with the yellow star we had to wear, made us decide to finish our shortened school term and return home.

Now Ivan was even more certain that he is going to live and we are going to die and he begged me to reconsider. I was tempted because I liked him a lot. He was sixteen years old, with blond hair and blue eyes, tall, highly intellectual and a poet. His father, divorced from his mother with whom he lived, was already in America, a former newspaperman and founder of the Denes Method of Psycho-drama. Ivan was confident that although Jewish, he would survive the war, because his destiny was to become a famous poet and join his father in America.

He was quite shy. Instead of saying he loved me, he wrote beautiful poems to me describing the color of my hair, my beautiful lips, etc. and how my beauty affected him. It was all very romantic, and I was proud to have such a boyfriend.

Now he asked me, "Eva, please stay with me. I will have no one to inspire me to write poems to." So, I introduced him to one of my aristocratic girlfriends from boarding school, Ilcsa, so that he should have his inspiration and he reluctantly let us go.

Ironically she became the cause of Ivan's death a few months later, because he left his hiding place to see her and never came back. His mother and grandmother were in tears when they told me this story after the war. I learned that one evening Ivan left his hiding place to show some poems to Ilcsa and never came back.

Now Ivan was even more certain that he is going to live and we are going to die and he begged me to reconsider. ~~I~~ I was tempted, because he was very intellectual and a poet and I liked him a lot. He was sixteen years old, with blond hair and blue eyes, tall and very shy. ~~Instead~~ Instead of saying he loved me, he wrote beautiful poems to me describing the color of my hair, my beautiful lips, etc. and how my beauty affected him. ~~I was very proud to have such a boyfriend, who was intellectual, sensitive and protective of me.~~

Now he asked me "Eva please stay with me. I will have no one to inspire me to write poems" So, I introduced him to one of my aristocratic girlfriends from boarding school Ilcsa, so that he should have his inspiration and he reluctantly let us go.

Ironically she became the cause of Ivan's death a few months later, because he left his hiding place to see her and never came back. ~~His~~ His father, a former newspaperman and founder of the Denes Method of psychodrama, ~~whom I met in New York after the war~~ blamed me for Ivan's death. He was divorced from Ivan's mother and in New York during the time of his tragic death, unable to do anything. ~~In any case, it seemed that one night~~ ^{leaved} ^{evening} Ivan left his hiding place to show some poems to Ilcsa and never came back. It turned out that coming back late, the Hungarian Police asked for identification and having found none, "shot him in the Danube" -the expression for being executed at the edge of the river and his body thrown into the water.

~~blamed me for Ivan's death. He~~

His father ~~maintained~~ maintained that had I also been in the hiding place, there would not have been a need for him to leave ~~his hiding place~~. I cried when I heard of Ivan's death, remembering my adolescent love and also ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ confidence of his destiny to survive the war and become a famous poet. And here I was, alive, one who was prepared for death. How strange are the ways of ~~destiny~~ ^{destiny} fate.

I arrived home to Sarbogard around the beginning of June. By this time my parents were moved to a Ghetto, and there was talk of everyone being taken away by the Germans. However, before the deportation, the Hungarian police on its own undertook the most cruel torture of the Jews, so that they could confiscate their hidden gold and silver and other valuables before handing them over to the Germans.

And that's when I lost respect for my father. As president of the Ghetto, and with his reputation for honesty and integrity, he refused when my mother begged him to hide or give to some Christian friends some of our valuables for safekeeping. He handed everything over to the authorities, because that was the law. So when the Hungarian police began questioning him to find out where he hid his gold and silver and other valuables, there was nothing to admit. So they began torturing him, using electric shocks and other methods. After the first day of torture he became ill and had to stay in bed. The doctor came and gave him a certificate saying my father was ill and could not ^{go} for further questioning. However the next day the police came and the beatings and tortures continued. After the third day he broke down and made up a story of a silver pocketbook which was in my mother's possession. With that false admission, they let him go and my mother's and my turn came.

To see my proud father lie in order not to be beaten was something I could neither understand nor respect at that time. All my life I looked up to him, a man respected and admired not only in Sarbogard but among his most eminent colleagues in Budapest for his unshakable belief in justice and ~~equality~~ truth and honesty under all circumstances.

What made him lie now? Was he afraid of the police or had he just given up? The answer may lie in the Hungarian Society to which he tried so desperately to belong.

- ✓ ✗ I was tempted, because I liked him a lot. He was sixteen years old, with blond hair and blue eyes, tall, highly intellectual and a poet. His father, divorced from his mother with whom he lived, was already in America, former newspaperman and founder of the Denes Method of Psychodrama. Ivan was confident that although Jewish, he would survive the war, because his destiny was to become a famous poet and join his father in America. He was quite shy. It was all very romantic and I was proud to have such a boyfriend.
- ✗ His mother and grandmother were in tears when they told me this story after the war.

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X Any Jew who was not a professional was excluded, even very rich businessmen. So there remained only two Jewish doctors and their families.

My mother was busy at the tennis club (a big thing at that time.) She did charity work and once a month they were invited to, or gave private "soiree"s or balls, with fifty to a hundred guests, the women in beautiful gowns, the men in tails. There were large varieties of hot and cold delicacies, gipsy music with wine flowing well into the morning when the guests finally left after eating the traditional cabbage soup.

There were about 300 Jewish people in this town of approximately 10.000 inhabitants. Most of them were small businessmen. My father's snobbish, discriminating behavior, and open disregard for the Jewish religious tradition (we only attended the Synagogue during the High Holidays, ate pork, and even had a Christmas tree) made him many enemies among the Jews of Sarbogard. When we were in the cattle car going toward Auschwitz, they said " Here you go Mr. High and Mighty to the same fate as we Jews . What did it help you to be such a big shot? "

Chapter 2.

Hungarian Society (with a capital S) was made up mostly of the titled nobility, the aristocracy. These princes, counts, and barons had huge estates, with several castles of hundred or more rooms, servants quarters, stables plus land of several thousand acres. On this land lived the poor peasants, in contrast to the enormous wealth of their landlords in small huts, where eight or ten people lived in one room. This Society was a very static one, and very caste-conscious, there was no upward mobility, one usually did not go into the same caste one was born in, peasant, artisan, businessman, professions. The aristocracy usually didn't do anything except run their huge estates, or go into politics. Money was never mentioned, it was considered bad form and a businessman with lots of money could never associate with a professional not to mention the nobility. One example of this extreme consciousness of titles, is the way the Hungarian language uses the word you, One is the regular you like tu in French, the familiar. For one whom one just met, there are two yous, one is for one who is above you in station, and one for who is below in station. One was never addressed by their name but by their various titles, for example my mother was called Frau Doctor Julius Hirsch.

My father embraced this Feudalistic system wholeheartedly, because he believed that by assimilating into this Society, he would be accepted as a Hungarian, rather than a Jew. He was quite successful in his quest for status, because my parents had a very active social life with the cream of Hungarian Society, such as the landed gentry, some judges, the Mayor, some doctors two of which were Jewish. My father believed in the autocratic principle of "Pater familias" (~~Head of family~~) and he ruled us with an iron hand. My mother accepted his leadership unquestioningly, She was 15 years younger, coming from a poorer background (her father was a small landowner) she was used living the life of High Society, having a beautiful home with four servants, a German governess for us and a secretary and law-clerk for my father.

I was terrified of my father, because he was very stern and critical. But I also admired him, because he was just, honest and intelligent.

He made an imposing figure, in his late forties, tall with dark brown hair, brown eyes and a handsome moustache. People said I looked like him. He was always elegantly, but conservatively dressed and carried a walking stick. I adored my mother, a beautiful woman with black hair and blue eyes. She was very social and gregarious, a good contrast to his sternness. People also loved her for her kind heart and innate tact and graciousness. Once a week there was free food in our house for the poor, who blessed her for her generosity.

I was considered very intelligent, getting the best grades in school. This worried my father. He kept telling me, "How will I find a husband for you, If you are always so serious and study so hard? Why can't you be more like your sister? She is clever, not so honest and serious like you." My sister had average grades, was blond blue-eyed, and very pretty with flattering ways. She was the only one who could soften up my father, by sitting in his lap and calling him Julie. I was very jealous of her, she was also envious because I was intelligent, a concert pianist and mother's favorite.

At the age of six I began studying the piano and by the age of ten, I was considered to be a child prodigy, giving small concerts around town. I loved playing the piano, I was in another world when I spent hours practicing, ~~even though everything came easily to me.~~ ^{the world of beauty and emotions.} Even during the performances I was carried away, and sometimes the audience went when I played the Second Hungarian Rhapsody by Liszt. ~~XXXXXXX~~ ^{local} ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ My teacher realized that I needed the best instruction available to guide my young talent, if I wanted to become a concert-pianist. For this reason, she arranged an audition, with an internationally famous pianist in Budapest. The audition came out all right. The famous pianist confirmed my teacher's opinion, that I was very talented. But hard work and discipline was needed. He agreed to take me as a student and I was overjoyed, Imagining already my name in lights, Eva Hirsch, I even thought I may change to Hirsch to give it a more artistic, Hungarian sound.

However my father ~~XXXXXXX~~ ^{brutally} dashed my high hopes and dreams. He said he did not want his daughter to run around on concert-tours and he definitely didn't want me to become a teacher. (Girls of good families didn't work, it was a disgrace) I pleaded with him, I wept but he was adamant. "You can play the piano for fun, but not as a career."

Instead you had better concentrate on learning how to become a lady so that you may marry "Hungarian Nobleman". Now his secret ambition became clear. By marrying us off, into the Hungarian Nobility, his own social position would become more secure. At that time, it was customary for parents to choose husbands for their daughters, and my father already had a large dowry set aside for that purpose. So he sacrificed my talent ^{for} personal ambition. I was crushed ^{on the} altar of and broken hearted, because I realized that without the help of the famous pianist, my future career as a concert pianist was over.

So, in order to become a lady, my father sent me off to a boarding school, attached to a Gymnasium in Budapest, which only accepted daughters of the nobility and some token Jews. I hated the whole thing, learning deportment and table manners, and walking on the streets of Budapest in uniforms conversing in French. However after a while I got used to it. As usual I did very well in school and also made many friends among the young countesses and aristocrats. I even had a best friend Ilona Kozma, and she was the one to whom I introduced Ivan on that fateful day, ~~before xxxxxxxx in 1944 xxxxxxxx~~. My sister followed me a year later. However she was only accepted at the gymnasium, because the boarding school had its quota of Jews already. ~~She~~ So, she lived at the house of a Jewish lady, which had its compensations, because she was much more free to come and go ~~as~~ ^{than} I.

All this happened between 1939 and 1944. Hitler's Army occupied Austria, Czechoslovakia. Soon it was marching through Poland and a full scale war raged. Hungary was on the side of the Germans and most of the students and the headmistress of the boarding school had fascist inclinations. They loved and admired Hitler and hoped he would win the ~~war~~ other countries.

Not so my father. We were forbidden to talk about Hitler and what he did to the Jews. ~~He~~ ^{My} didn't even let one of my cousins, who

escaped from Czechoslovakia stay in our house. He hoped ^{against hope} that it ~~was~~ ^{would} come as a shock to all of us, but particularly to him when ~~the Germans occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944. He thought till~~

the last minute, that by living a highly ethical professional and moral life and by assimilating into the Hungarian Society, his values * therefore the values of Hungarian Society ~~will~~ ^{would}

prevail. Like an ostrich he put his head in the sand, while the world ~~was~~ ^{was} collapsing around him.

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Now as he was standing before the Hungarian Police, which was made up of the lowest elements, all his beliefs became a mockery. As he was tortured and humiliated, he realized that in front of the Hungarian Police he was just another Jew, ready to be stripped of his property and then laughingly thrown over to the Germans. *

Looking back after all these years and considering his sufferings, and in a way feel sorry for him. I have long ago forgiven his frailties. He was a victim of his times of Society and his upbringing. To this was added his own rigidity and ambition, and strict adherence to standards set by a society to which he aspired, but didn't really belong.

He was a broken man, dead in spirit by the time he arrived at the Auschwitz gas chambers.

* Was he afraid? Has he just given up? We will never know, but I imagine, it must have been a little ~~xxxxx~~ ^{each} of both, and a weariness of spirit knowing that everything he lived for has been in vain.

Or was there a certain weakness behind the facade of righteousness and stern exterior ready to crumble at the first sign of trouble?

Chapter 3.

After the police let my father go, they took my mother in for questioning. My mother did have an evening bag, ^{but} ~~however~~ it wasn't real silver, just a beaded pocketbook. So my mother told them about it, but they didn't believe her. ~~So~~ They started with beatings, and electric shocks. Contrary to my father, my mother manifested real courage. Not a word escaped her lips, not even a little cry. They kicked her, they teased her. "You little gipsy, you don't cry, We will show you how it hurts, then you will cry." She didn't answer, ~~she~~ ^{she} remained silent, even though the electric shocks became ~~stronger~~ stronger. Finally, with grudging admiration, they let her go.

Now my turn came. I had only a vague idea of what was going on, because our parents tried to hide the tortures from us, thinking the children ~~would~~ ^{would} not be questioned.

~~So~~, When I went into the police ~~station~~ station, I was surprised to see men with big rubber sticks, sitting around ominously. "Where are the family jewels?" they asked me. "I don't know," I answered contemptuously. With that, they turned me over, so that the soles of my feet were high up, and they started beating me right on my soles. I didn't cry out, but kept counting how many times they were doing it, ~~and~~ hoping I would lose consciousness. After about the ~~tenth~~ tenth time, it really started to hurt. From all the pain and nervousness, I couldn't hold back my urine, and it came out in big splashes and made my torturers all wet. They were cursing, and the situation would have been funny, under different circumstances. After being urinated on, they tried a little electric current. This didn't hurt so much, and I told them I didn't know anything about hidden jewelry. So, they let me go. After coming home, I felt proud, that I behaved so courageously and I felt very grown up, that I was included in the trials of my parents. ~~As~~ My sister wasn't questioned.

All these ^{events} ~~happening~~ coincided with my adolescence, as I kept looking with wonder at my growing figure. One morning ~~after taking~~ ^{after} taking a bath, I looked in the mirror naked, ~~and~~ I saw a beautiful body, lovely breasts, small waist, ~~narrow~~ curving hips and nice legs. People also noticed my beautifully proportioned body. They kept saying "Too bad, her face doesn't match her figure, ~~otherwise~~

I remember
the man.

otherwise she really would be beautiful." Now I saw it myself, and the first stirrings of sexual desire began to emerge. I imagined myself married to a Hungarian nobleman and how nice life could be. I kept writing to Ivan passionate love letters, which must have surprised him, because our relationship had been mostly spiritual rather than physical. However I missed even those few kisses and felt sorry that he wasn't with me.

In the meantime reality kept intruding on my daydreams. Here we were in the Ghetto, ready to be shipped to some unknown place, perhaps to die. Sure enough, barely a week after the tortures, we were told to get ready to leave. We were only allowed to pack one suitcase each of the most important clothing. Before we left, they even took away my mother's gold wedding band, the only ~~jewelry~~ thing left of her beautiful jewelry. Now even the wedding band signifying marriage was gone. We left our home with our priceless antiques furniture, Persian carpets, original paintings, china, etc.) to be plundered at will. All we had was a suitcase each. My sister and I each carried a sweater which our mother knitted for us. This sweater may have been the reason we ended up in the gas chambers instead of coming with us, because my sister forgot hers when getting off at Auschwitz, and my mother ran back to get it, never to be seen again.

Now we were marching on the ~~streets~~ streets of Sarbogard. I remember, I wore a sleeveless summer dress. It was early June, the weather was beautiful, and we were marching towards death. The people on the street saw us, and turned away. One peasant boy whistled at me, but then he saw the yellow star on my dress and he too looked away.

The police took us first to a school where they opened up our suitcases to search for hidden jewelry. Then we had to go in a cubicle, take off our clothes ^{and} and examined in our most private parts, to see if some more jewelry could be found. That's when it turned out that some of Sarbogard's young ladies weren't virgins after all. Luckily Bobbie and ^I had nothing to be ashamed of on that score.

Then we were taken to the cattle cars. We were packed close ~~together~~ together like sardines and the train started to move. I wasn't sad and most of the young people in the wagon were joking

and singing. First of all, ~~we~~ didn't know where we were being taken. We ^{had} never heard the word Auschwitz before, we were completely ignorant. The worst, we imagined, would be to be taken to a work camp, and ~~for~~ ^{for} doing hard physical labor. The Germans very shrewdly had some people who were taken previously send back postcards saying they were working and doing well. Of course this wasn't true, but it quieted the fears of most people. This way the people willingly went to the gas chambers, because they didn't know till they were under the showers that these weren't real showers. So most of the people on the train kept hoping for the best, and we young people were in a most boisterous mood. We were young, let's live till the last minute come what may!

We huddled together, starting to play some word game. Suddenly I see the hand of one of the most handsome Jewish boy's in Barbagard (hands off for me, because of father's beliefs) creep under the skirt of one of the girls. The girl didn't say anything, she didn't move. We continued with the game, his hand remained there for at least a good half hour, in fact it was moving back and forth. I looked in fascination, nobody else seemed to be aware of what was going on, except of course the participants themselves, who seemed to enjoy the proceedings. Finally the game broke up, ^{and} we were given some water at the station.

In the mean time my father sat alone in a corner, his hair turned completely white, lost in thoughts. I went to him, "Father, how are you?" He looked at me without saying a word, he was completely lost to the world. I felt terrible about him. My mother was her usual self, trying to help with food for people who didn't bring anything, (we were only given water once in a while) and consoling people who were crying or unhappy.

After a day and night of traveling, the train was connected to another one, carrying more Jews and in a few more hours, we arrived at Auschwitz.

Chapter 4.

Suddenly the train stopped. Guards shouted, "Get out, leave your suitcases on the train." We got out, surprised that we had to leave behind even our most treasured possessions. But the guards said, they will take care of it. My mother came with us, I couldn't see my father in the big commotion. Suddenly my mother asked "Bobbie Babik, where is your sweater?" Bobbie said, she couldn't find it. My mother ran back to get it, in the mean time we were pushed along by the guards. Before we arrived at the gate where the selections were taking place, we looked back. There was mother, shouting, "Evi, take care of Bobbie, Bobbie, take care of Evi." Tears came to my eyes, when I write this, she was so good, why did she have to die? And when I think of people being taken to the gas chambers, which they mistook for showers, and the gas coming out in slow motion, to save money. I think of my mother, how did she feel there, standing under the showers? I still get nightmares, thinking about it, I imagine myself being under the showers, slowly inhaling the deadly poison, why so slow, to prolong the sufferings? My father probably didn't suffer that much, he probably didn't even know what was going on. But my young beautiful mother, why she, why not I instead, who was ready to die.

We were standing before a German officer, (later we found out it was Mengele) who waved with his stick in different directions. People going one way were going to live, people going the other way were going to die. Bobbie and I were chosen to live for the time being, and we arrived before a ~~large~~ big fence. On top of it was written in big letters "Arbeit macht frei" (work makes one free,) what a joke under the circumstances. We entered the door, and went toward the showers. (Real this time.) We were told to take off our clothes. Our head, under arms and pubic regions was shaved. We were handed an old dress, some underwear and told to take a shower. We did not get a number, perhaps because it was already late in 1944 when we arrived and they didn't want to bother. After the showers, we were taken to a barracks, where people were living in unbelievable conditions, most of them wore rags, there were no beds, we slept on the floors. There was not even room to sleep with your feet in place, ^{because} people got in one's way.

For food there was some terrible tasting soup and equally unsatisfying bread, which I didn't touch for two days. Finally I had to eat it, there was no choice. In the morning around five A.M. we were woken up. "Zehl Appel" We had to line up in the cinder court, to be counted. Sometimes we stood for hours, till the U.S. person came to inspect us and chose some people to work for the day. For the rest of us, there was nothing to do, just sit around in the dirt and filth. You could walk around, but the streets were dirty too. Auschwitz was surrounded by a big wire fence, anybody who tried to escape was electrocuted immediately. Most of the people who were there a longer time looked like human corpses and even some of the the ladies of Garbograd began to lose their minds, or die of starvation, one of the two choices.

As for myself, I was hoping to die as soon as possible, rather than go on in this intolerable condition. My whole feeling while in Auschwitz was one of rage on one hand, and helplessness and longing for death on the other. Why did this thing have to happen to me? I blamed my father, *who* in his blind obedience to the rules, *of Hungary's Society* he gave up many opportunities to escape. We had relatives in America, who from 1938 on, urged us, to leave Hungary and come to "the home of the free" My mother was willing to go, but of course my father refused, again his social position being the main consideration. He was afraid that he won't be able to practice law in the U.S. because in Hungary he was trained in Roman law, while the lawyers in the U.S. practiced Anglo-Saxon law. He could also have gone to Switzerland in exchange for his considerable property (land and apartment houses) however he chose to stay and now Robbie and I were suffering because of it.

After about three weeks after our arrival, we were told to strip naked, because Mengele was coming to choose about thirty people to be taken away. We were hoping it was work camp, because the sick people were being taken away by lesser personages, than Mengele. So there we were standing in rows of five, my sister standing in front of me. My figure still looked good even after three weeks of starvation, because incredibly, I was chosen, I looked back to see, about my sister, Incredibly Mengele chose her too. One young girl was standing there with her mother behind her. The girl was chosen, not her mother. The mother begged to go along. She said "Please take me too. I am still young, I want to be with my daughter. I can work very hard." He let her come along, and we were a happy group, because no matter where we were going at last we were

leaving Auschwitz. Mengele must have seemed a God at that time, ^{all} I remember of him, ^{was} that he was immaculate in his uniform, a very slight man.

We were given clean uniforms, (like a prisoner's on it) and put in a train,. This time it was a real compartment, and we were happily looking out the windows, seeing the landscape of Germany. Our hopes came true, we were not being killed, but taken to a real work camp, in Peterswaldau near Breslau in Silesia.

Chapter 15

We arrived in Peterwoldau, a group of happy people, because whatever lay in store for us was better, than the fate we left behind. There were about thirty-five of us, all Hungarians and all young except the mother of that beautiful young girl, Zeddy. We were taken to a big building which housed all the Jewish women, who worked in various German factories around the area. Most of these women were Polish Jews, and most had been in various camps since 1939, which was ^{work} almost 5 years by the time we arrived. The head of the ^{work} Camp, Kopo was a beautiful ~~blond~~ ^{we see} blond Polish Jewess around her middle thirties. She was responsible ^{we see} that all the various troupes went off in time to the various factories, and in general she ran the Camp. Above her were eight or ten SS women, of different ranks, this being the custom of the Germans to make one or two Jews responsible for the fate of all other Jews. Like my father was president of the Ghetto. Bronka, our Capo looked almost like a German woman herself and she ran the Camp with stern discipline. Every morning there was "Zehl Appel" like in Auschwitz, but she looked over all the people before presenting us to the her SS superiors. There was hardly any trouble and the camp functioned smoothly.

The upper part of the building was reserved for dormitories, where we slept in double bunks. There were about 10 bunks in each room, so twenty people slept ~~in each room~~. Food was also quite good, compared to Auschwitz, we had three meals a day, ~~and~~ Sunday we ate always something special in the big dining room. We felt we were in heaven, we also got a change of uniforms, some undergar so that we should look presentable in the factory. Still, most of us were hungry all the time, particularly some of the people who were there for years, ~~so~~ they resorted to different methods, like stealing or bartering to acquire enough food.

The first night after our arrival, I was looking around the dormitories, and whom do I see, but a young girl who was already well-known in Budapest, Helene Benlyon, I knew her, because she lived at the same lady's house, where my sister used to stay. I said, "Hello Helene, how did you get here? I didn't know you were Jewish." She said, "I am only half Jewish, but I was denounced by the Hungarian Secret Police." How long are you here?" I asked, She said, "Almost a year" and looked very sad, because we were both thinking

of the time, when she performed in a concert hall in Budapest, her debut recital at the age of 19. "Well" I said, "Maybe is it not too late for you Madeleine. The war will be over soon, and then you can go back to your concert career" No, she said, it is too late. I couldn't understand why, when I heard a voice "Where are you Madeleine?" the voice came from an ugly mannish looking Polish woman. Madeleine said, "I have to go" and disappeared. I found out that this woman was very influential in the factory where she worked and had much food. When Madeleine arrived she befriended her and offered protection if Madeleine would sleep with her. Madeleine had made her choice. I was shocked. I didn't realize there were Lesbians at Camp, but it turned out even our beautiful Bronka had her different lovers. I guess, being shut in with women for five years, and being hungry can make you do a lot of things. Again, I and most of our group ~~was~~ ^{were} happy, that our circumstances were a little different, because most of the girls worked in heavy factories while we were taken to a ~~knitting~~ ^{weaving} factory. The morning after we arrived, after ~~breakfast~~ ^{breakfast} we were told to get ready for work. ~~We were taken to the factory with the 33 women in our group.~~ ^{kept in housing under guard (in town) 7} One of them was very strict looking with old fashioned granny-classes and her hair in a severe bun. The other was a young little blonde, who seemed easygoing. We didn't know their names, if we wanted something we raised our hand, like in school. The older one was our boss, she was with us all the time, she came to get us in the morning and took us back to Camp. The other one sometimes came only to the factory. No one in our group spoke German, only my sister and I, so communication was difficult.

We were taken to a "Severai" or Weaving factory. They showed us the the weaving machines we had to work on. They made material, some of it in different colors, so it was hard to use the machines. Some workers used ~~that~~ ^{they} manipulated two machines at once. They were French POW's who came from Lyons, and they manipulated the machines which made their famous silk. There were regular German workers,

the French POW's and us. The German workers were told that we were prisoners of war, therefore the uniform and shaven head, most of the German people didn't know about Auschwitz. ~~Kommunisten~~

The German workers got paid regular wages, the French POW's reduced wages, and ~~we~~ got nothing, just enough to eat so that we could produce just as much as a regular worker. However the owner of the factory paid the SS one mark a day for each of us, I am sure the food and other expenses amounted to only a fraction of that, so the German government made money. That's how Hitler's government cleverly ~~saved~~ the final solution, the old and sick and children were killed off, the people of working capacity used till they also would die of malnutrition.

Chapter 6 Continued

Chapter 5 5

I was also shown a weaving machine, but after trying me out a few times, ^{the manager said} they ~~re-learned~~ ^{became} I was hopeless. I would always get mixed up between the different threads I had to put through the machines, so ^{they realized} it would be easier to assign me a task, than to correct my mistakes. So they put me to ^{to work} some ^{other} ~~little~~ machines, which put the threads into spools. This was easy work, ^{however} one had to stand all day. My sister was also doing the same work as I.

After working ^{days} a few hours, I ^{was} ^{most of the time} became tired and kept sitting down in between the machines, while I was still doing the work. The SS lady came to tell me I cannot sit down, I have to work harder. I tried, but I was getting tired. Finally they summoned the president of the company. "How dare you sit down when you have to work?" he shouted at me, "I don't work for Germany!" was my answer and I sat down. Even now I am amazed at my courage, I could have been killed on the spot. The "Herr Director" also looked with amazement at my answer. He and the SS woman, had a conference. My fellow workers begged me to reconsider, they were sure my behavior would also have had repercussions on them, but I was adamant. I sat, and didn't try to work the machines while they had the conference. Most of the people thought I will be shipped back to Auschwitz with the rest of the bad workers to be killed. But ~~that~~ God was on my side. All the workers did very well except me, so it was no purpose to take just one prisoner back to Auschwitz. Also at this time, there was a Russian offensive on that area, so they didn't want to risk getting caught. So with all these considerations, ^{and} the fact that I spoke perfect German, I became ^{a SS assistant} ~~assistant~~ to the SS woman with glasses.

Chapter 6

then translated
all her
orders
of the
day
into
Hungarian

One day, I was cleaning some machines, when a German woman worker approached me and put something in my hand. I hid it quickly knowing that she faced prison if found out. ~~Other German workers were forbidden to have~~ ^{that she had} communication with ~~the~~ prisoners, ~~this was~~ strictly forbidden under threat of severe punishment. She left quickly and I found a piece of bread with some meat on it. I was touched that she risked her life to give us food, so next morning I thanked her. The day after that she came again and gave me a pair of stockings. After this we had several talks when not observed. I told her about Auschwitz, about being Jewish, but she didn't understand. She was told, that we were criminals, and that's why we had shaved heads and prison uniforms. So when after the war, most Germans begged us to forgive them, because they didn't know anything, I believed some, because of this experience.

At night after coming home from the factory and eating our meager supper, we were usually still hungry. Then one of us went out to the court hunting for potatoes. Of course this was also severely punished, but we each risked our lives, when in the dark we would hunt for potatoes which would fall from the truck during the day, only to be boiled or roasted ^{if} whatever we could do with it in the dormitory. Only one who has hungered for a long time can imagine the delicious taste of a boiled potato, with ~~bacon~~ or it, which we saved from our breakfast. After a while we got used to the constant hunger-pangs. Sometimes, when I was working on my remnants, I thought back of our home in Sarbogard and the wonderful meals we had. Now I was looking forward to the piece of meat I ^{might} get for dinner or the thick part of the soup for lunch. How easy it is to be satisfied, when you have so little!

In a few months, most of us had nice curly short hairdos, and we felt like women again. The first romance in the factory started with Hedy, the beautiful girl who with her mother became the best worker among us winning first and second prizes. I won the prize of being the worst and my sister the one before the worst. One of the French POW's fell in love with ^{Hedy} ~~her~~. Of course, they couldn't talk, but they gave each other long glances and smiles. It was all very romantic and we were speculating what ^{to} was going to happen with them after the war ends. ^{she still had some fights}

My sister ~~and~~ I didn't get along better than at home, ~~the sibling rivalry was still there. We fought constantly, sometimes we even hit each other. We slept in the same bed, and we were always kicking each other. She resented the fact that I had a bigger job than she~~ ^{well, she tried to kiss her around} ~~she was just working in the factory. Still it was good to have her~~ ^{she was} around, she was still family. We thought of our parents, but didn't know their fate and hoped that they survived and we will meet after the war.

By early 1945 we knew that the Allies are going to win, and were pretty sure that we will survive, if the Germans don't kill us with them. We had an O.G.P. board, and kept trying it to find out what will be the date for the end of the war. It came out May 8, 1945. Sure enough that was the date, when the war ended.

Chapter 7.

It is an unforgettable feeling, when one is suddenly free. To be free, when one has been a virtual slave, when one had to work in order not to be killed, when one had to resort to all kinds of strategies just to stay alive. To be a yes man to the SS woman was my case, and even though I considered myself fortunate to have had this position, I was still a slave in a Concentration Camp. Suddenly I am liberated and I am joyously alive, young, sixteen and miraculously in possession of all my faculties and healthy. Why was I saved, when so many died? this was a question I often put to myself. Most of the people who survived were the strong ones, the clever ones, I ~~would say~~ ^{to my mind} a lower moral character, than the ones who died. The sensitive ones, the people who put faith in truth, morals before practicality died, the cunning ones survived. They had to cheat, lie, even in the case of Helene who had sex with a woman, sell themselves sometimes even kill in order to survive. These ^{deaths} ~~changed~~ their character and most of the inmates of concentration camps whom I met later, manifested this brutality, and vengeance for the fate they had to endure.

I don't think I was strong, or cunning / I didn't even particularly wanted to live. Why did I survive? Maybe God had a plan for me, I was unbelievably lucky. To be given back life when one is sure of death is a gift I cherished. I have always been grateful to be given this second chance for life and I am not afraid to die, because I was close to death and lived again.

Now with the arrival of the Russian troops, the SS people disappeared and we were left alone at the Camp. The Russian soldiers looked quite wild, and they got drunk and went on a wild spree in town. I ~~don't know~~ ^{didn't hear of one} ~~about~~ ^{being} raped, but I know they plundered the German homes and took whatever they wanted. Some of the more astute Jews also joined them on a spree, and they took a lot of valuables from German homes. I also went once with them, but only took food. In fact the first few days all Sobibor did was eat. After that we looked around town and met some of the ^{former} inmates of other Camps, mainly boys. There we found two Polish boys Henryk and Zoska, and started going with Henryk I with Zoska. They and the French PC ^{finally} were able to talk to each other, they made a beautiful pair.

I finally located a piano and started practicing. The first few times my fingers hardly moved, but after a week I announced I was ready to give a recital. The burgomaster of the town was very happy to arrange this treat for the Russian soldiers and the next Sunday afternoon the concert took place. My program was Bach: Prelude and Fugue Bk. I no. 2 Beethoven: Pathétique Sonata. After I finished I played some Chopin Preludes and then the famous Liszt Etude, tears streaming from the eyes of my mostly Hungarian Audience. The Russian Major was also very impressed. I got flowers from him. Later on I heard, he asked the Burgomaster then I started to say "Who is this beautiful girl in the white dress at the piano?" He was for the culture of the Russians. Actually we did not care too much for our liberators, they were rough, some of them didn't know the difference between Jew and German they were ready to kill anybody in sight and didn't plan that at the concert.

Motek and I almost became victims of this Russian stupidity. One day we were walking around town, it must have been about 5:30 P.M. when we encountered ^{ed} two Russian Soldiers. They said, "Halt" I told Motek to stop, but he got scared and started running. I ran with him and we heard shots all around us, the Russian Soldiers went following. We finally arrived at the Camp and I ran inside. However they caught us with Motek put him in front of a tree and told him they will kill him. (So far we didn't know what we were accused of) Motek, who spoke Russian begged them not to kill him, because he is one of the Jews, a Jew not a German and he was in concentration camp. So they let him go but only if he tells them where I ^{would} ~~was~~. In a very unheroic fashion, which made me lose my romantic feelings for him, he announced that I ~~was~~ inside the Camp. So I had to go down and we were taken to the town's jail. There we found out, that there was a curfew at 5 P.M. which was not announced, so we were guilty of being on the street after curfew.

I didn't think that was such a serious offence, but we were in jail for three days, and we didn't even have a hearing. I didn't see Motek too much because he was in the men's ward, but I was angry with him to get me into such a mess. Finally we had a hearing, and the judge announced that we ^{were} ~~was~~ sentenced to Siberia, as convicted prisoners. I was aghast, I ^{was} ~~was~~ just liberated from Hitler and now I'll have to go to Siberia, this ^{was} ~~was~~ something I had to do. I told my sister, to tell the burgomaster

and tell him, that the girl who gave the concert is in jail now. The Burgomaster talked to the Russian Mayor, who let me go from jail, if I leave Petersburg ^{with} in 24 hours. I was ~~just~~ glad to go and Motek and I and Moryen and my sister took the train towards the U.S. Zone.

Before I left I said good bye to "old four eyes". She kissed me, after inviting me to her house for coffee, and announced that she always liked the Jews and she was never a Nazi. I didn't say anything, but I was ashamed when Motek told me that he slapped his former German ^{SS} boss. However I just couldn't bring myself to say "old four-eyes" as Hannah Arendt says in her book "the Banality of Evil," maybe she was a victim too.

To this day, I am not ~~mad~~ ^{angry} at the Germans, like most of the former inmates of Concentration Camps. They have committed a tremendous crime, for sure, but when you talk to them person to person, not everyone was a Nazi and some of them didn't know about Auschwitz, like the woman who gave me food in the factory. Even "Old four-eyes" and definitely the other little blond ~~blond~~ ^{blond}, our two bosses, were two simple girls who got good pay for easy work, supervising the Jewish workers. They also wore a nice uniform so they felt important. I don't think they were personally antisemitic, although they were influenced by the Hitler's propaganda about the superior Aryan race. In my experience there were just as many if not more antisemites in Hungary and Poland, who were overjoyed to see their Jews killed. Our Russian liberators ~~were~~ ^{were} weren't too happy to see so many Jews, some of my former coworkers complained "It was better under the Germans, they were more civilized"

In other words, I don't think one can make a country responsible for crimes committed, the country is made up of people and there are good and bad everywhere.

Chapter 8

After Leaving Petaswaldan

We didn't know where we wanted to go. My sister and I first thought of going right back home to look for our parents, but the two boys persuaded us to remain in Germany for a while. They reasoned, that we could find out by letter if our parents were alive or not, and if so, we could always return later. There was also the danger of both Hungary and Poland going communist, and Motek had enough experience with the Russians, ~~aside~~ ^{aside} from what we just had gone through, to know enough to stay away from them.

In the mean time Motek started to talk seriously about marriage. There were lots of romances and marriages going on right after liberation. Most people were lonely, they lost most of their families and were anxious to form new ties. However both I and my sister felt we were too young, also ~~both boys weren't our types~~ ^{we weren't in love with the boys}. So after arriving in Peking near Munich which had a huge D.P. Camp, we parted company.

At the Camp we decided to register for immigration to the U.S. We had three uncles in New York. One of them Uncle Alex, was more than happy to give us an affidavit, that he is willing to assume responsibility for us and now all we had to do ~~was~~ ^{was} wait till we would receive our visas.

As I went in to register at the American Joint Distribution Committee, I noticed a very good looking young man in officers uniform, He told me, that he was not American, but Romanian and his name was Freddy Marcovici. I didn't pay much attention to him, I was busy ~~again~~ to find a piano to practice.

I found a piano in the recreation room. When the ~~people~~ ^{director of Rec.} heard me play, he offered me two jobs. One was to accompany a newly formed theater group, the other was to play the piano for a dance band.

I accepted both, and having no music, I right away made up melody and accompaniment on the piano, just from hearing the songs. ~~So~~ ^{So},

^{and} I was busy ~~and~~ The pay was good, double what the D.P.'s got, who didn't work plus about 3 packs of American cigarettes a week, which I could sell on the black market.

The black market flourished all over Germany, the mark lost almost all its value, so people were bartering. Fortunes were made and lots of Polish Jews made the beginning of their money

~~making~~
~~money~~

~~I also took~~

playing the piano in Camp.

With this
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my
reputation
was made

Our troubles were far from over. There were constant air raids, and we went along with the Germans in the air-raid shelters. ^{SS} Bronya our Kapo still had to keep on the good side of her superiors, We were all afraid, that in case the Russians reach Peterswaldau before the end of war, the SS will flee and ^{after us} take with them, or kill us.

For diversion, for the birthday of the Head SS woman, the whole camp was cleaned from top to bottom, a delicious dinner was served and the ^{opera} Fledermaus was put on, by the inmates. It was an excellent production, I wonder where ^{the principals sang very well} the staff got their score of the Opera. ~~There was no musical accompaniment, but they had lovely costumes.~~ ^{with some good and} In any case, The SS lady was very pleased and we also had a good time. ^{Thank}

In April 1945 we were getting close to the end of war. However I was so weak from malnutrition, that I contracted pneumonia. I was taken to a Hospital, reserved for Jewish prisoners. I was between life and death for about two weeks. ^{but with good care + medicine} But I survived, but ^{however} ~~completely~~ lost my beautiful figure, I was skin and bones.

Still I was grateful to be alive and kept praying to God, please God, let me get through, just for one more day," In this fashion May 8 1945 arrived and we were liberated by a screaming horde of Russian soldiers.

